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A  
LETTER  
TO  
GILBERT WEST, Esq;  
And to the  
Author of the OBSERVATIONS on  
St. Paul's CONVERSION.



[Price One Shilling.]

THE

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(Price One Shilling)



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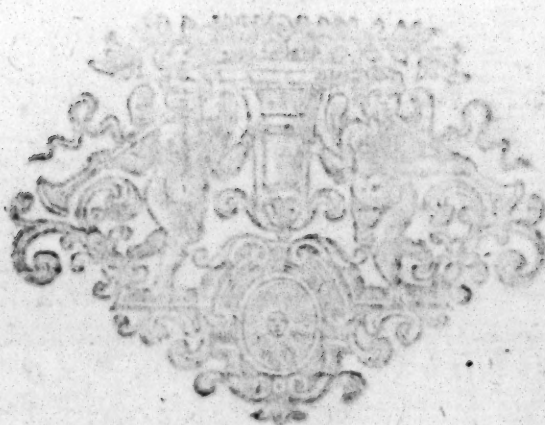


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L O N D O N:  
Printed for R. DODSLEY in *Pall-mall*; and Sold by  
M. COOPER at the *Globe* in *Pater-noster-Row*.  
M DCC XLVIII.

A  
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TO  
GILBERT WEST, ESQ.

And to the  
Author of the OBSERVATIONS  
on St. PAUL'S Conversion.



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Printed for R. DODD in Pall-mall; and sold by  
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## ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

## READER.

*THE Author of the following Sheets, sincerely endeavours to find out and establish Truth, and is not conscious of any sort of Prejudice or Byass; nor would willingly offend any Man living; therefore if in this Pursuit, and with this sole View, it should seem to any candid Reader,*  
*that*

*that some Expressions may be capable of an Interpretation not consistent with his profess'd Design, he utterly disclaims such Interpretation, and desires they may be placed to the Score of Unskilfulness in Language, Inaccuracy, Oversight, or any thing rather than what he has all along intended to avoid. It is difficult to propose Arguments with any Strength or Clearness (especially if concise) without an Air of Positiveness. Whatever therefore may have this Appearance, he hopes will not be attributed to Confidence, being himself rather diffident, and truly desirous of better Information, which he is ready to receive with Deference and Gratitude, if offered with Reason and Candour.*

*In*



*In this Nation, the Protestant Religion is professed, and Freedom of Debate is rather encouraged than discountenanced, every one is invited by its most zealous Defenders, to propose his Doubts and Difficulties (with Decency and good Manners) as the best Means to establish the Truth; he has therefore taken the Liberty allow'd, and endeavour'd to keep within the Limits prescrib'd. This is indeed the very Foundation of Protestantism, which can never suffer by it. For these Reasons he persuades himself, that none will be so weak, or so inconsistent with their Principles (if Protestants) as to charge him with Views he disowns, there being nothing he aims at promoting so much as Truth, which*  
every

*every consistent Protestant must and will acknowledge to be the only Basis of his Religion. The Author is engag'd therefore in their Cause, and proposes only some Doubts, in order to have them resolv'd.*





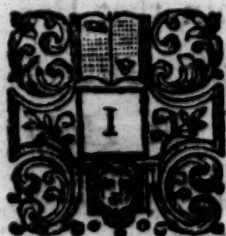


A  
L E T T E R  
T O

*Gilbert West, Esq;*

And to the  
Author of the OBSERVATIONS on  
St. Paul's CONVERSION.

GENTLEMEN,



Have read both your Performances, with a sincere Intention of submitting to fair Evidence, and think your Arguments of great Weight, on Supposition of the Guinefs and Authenticity of the New Testament, and of the Truth of the Facts therein

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related :

related : But if you, who have Learning and Leisure, are obliged to take for granted so much, as it appears you do ; how much more must I, and the rest of the Vulgar, who have not these Advantages ?

WHAT Proof have we, or can we possibly have, of Facts done, and Events said to have happened so long ago, and in a Country so distant from our own ? Not ordinary or probable, but more extraordinary and improbable than were ever done, or ever came to pass in any other Age or Country whatsoever, and which surely need a kind of Proof, in some measure proportionate to the Nature of 'em.

It is allowed by all reasonable Writers for Christianity, that the Evidences of it were much stronger near the Time and Place of its Promulgation ; but especially within that Period distinguish'd by Miracles, the Gift of Tongues, apparent Effusions of the Holy Ghost, and other supernatural Concomitants of preaching the Gospel ; all which are now ceased. These were very strong and (then) necessary Testimonials to, and Credentials of  
the



the divine Mission of the Apostles and their Followers, who were endowed with all these Powers by God himself, as they professed, in order to convince their Hearers of the Truth of the Gospel, and particularly of the Resurrection of Christ, in whose Name they preached, and perform'd all these Wonders, as the Scriptures testify. And are these now less necessary? instead of which, we have nothing but mere human Testimony, or Historical Evidence, unaccompany'd with any kind of Miracle, or any Token of divine Concurrence, notwithstanding these seem to be promised to attend the Preachers or preaching of the Gospel, even to the End of the World, as apparently necessary for the Conviction of Mankind. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. *Go teach all Nations, &c.—And lo, I am with you always even unto the End of the World.* Mark xv. 5. *And he said unto them, Go ye into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature.* Ver. 17. *And these Signs shall follow them that believe, In my Name they shall cast out Devils, they shall speak with new Tongues, they shall take up Serpents, and if they drink any deadly Thing it shall not hurt them; they shall lay Hands on the*

*Sick, and they shall recover. Ver. 20. And they went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following*

I do not recollect the least Hint in the Scriptures, that these should cease at a certain (or at any) Time ; but there is all imaginable Reason to believe, that the Christians of that Age expected the Continuation of 'em to the End of the World.

ORACLES are also long since ceased, and why? it is generally said, because People ceased to believe 'em. The same Reason is given why we have no more Witches in *England*, and may not Scepticks also insinuate this to be the Reason why Miracles ceased at the Time they did (in or about the fourth Century, as say the Protestants generally, but Dr. *Middleton* indeed, supposes the Power of working them confined to the Apostolick Age.) *Christ* himself frequently said he could do no mighty Works in such or such a Place, because of the Unbelief of the People.



ON the Contrary, where Credulity still subsists (as among *Roman Catholicks*) there the Power of working Miracles remains, at least that Church pretends so, and the People believe it.

THE Doctor above-mentioned, in his introductory Discourse, *page 6.* has the following Passage—“ This Claim of a miraculous Power (which is now peculiar to the Church of *Rome*) was universally asserted and believed in all Christian Countries, and in all Ages of the Church till the Time of the Reformation. For Ecclesiastical History makes no Difference between one Age and another, but carries on the Succession of its Miracles, as of all other common Events, through all of them indifferently, to that memorable Period. But the Light of the Reformation dispelled the Charm; and what *Cicero* says of the *Pythian* Oracle, may as truly be said of the Popish Miracles; when Men began to be less credulous, their Power vanished; for that Spirit of Enquiry with which

B 3

“ Christendom

“ Christendom was then animated, detected  
 “ the Cheat.”——Was it better or worse  
 for Mankind that the Cheat was detected?  
 The Doctor seems to suppose it *better*; in  
 which, I dare say, the Author of the Obser-  
 vations, would agree with him, notwith-  
 standing he owns, *p.* 29, 30. “ That some good  
 “ Men in the Heathen World had pretended  
 “ to divine Revelations, and introduced or  
 “ supported Religions they knew to be false,  
 “ under a Notion of publick Utility; but be-  
 “ sides that this Practice was built upon Maxims  
 “ disclaimed by the *Jews*, (who looking up-  
 “ on Truth, not Utility, to be the Basis of  
 “ their Religion, abhorred all such Frauds,  
 “ and thought them injurious to the Ho-  
 “ nour of God) the Circumstances they acted  
 “ in were very different from those of St.  
 “ *Paul*.——The first Reformers of savage,  
 “ uncivilized Nations, had no other Way to  
 “ tame those barbarous People, and bring  
 “ them to submit to Order and Government,  
 “ but by the Reverence which they acquired  
 “ from this Pretence.—The Fraud was there-  
 “ fore alike beneficial to the Deceiver and  
 “ Deceived. And in all other Instances which  
 “ can



“ can be given of good Men acting this Part,  
 “ they not only did it to serve good Ends,  
 “ but were secure of its doing no Harm.”  
 “ Thus when *Lycurgus* persuaded the *Spartans*,  
 “ or *Numa* the *Romans*, that the Laws of the  
 “ one were inspired by *Apollo*, or those of the  
 “ other by *Egeria*, when they taught their  
 “ People to put great Faith in Oracles, or in  
 “ Augury, no temporal Mischief either to  
 “ them or to their People could attend the  
 “ Reception of that Belief.”

I would not willingly put any Construction  
 upon the Author's Words which they do not  
 naturally bear, nor even that, if he does not  
 intend and avow it, having the highest E-  
 steem for his Character and Abilities; and am  
 rather inclined to suspect my own Reasoning,  
 when I appear to oppose his Sentiments, than  
 fond of such Opposition.

But by the Expressions,—“ Some, good  
 “ Men in the Heathen World had pretend-  
 “ ed to divine Revelations, &c.—and the first  
 “ Reformers of savage, uncivilized Nations  
 “ had no other Way to tame those barbarous  
 “ People,

“ People, and bring them to Order and Go-  
 “ vernment, but by the Reverence which  
 “ they acquired from this Pretence. —The  
 “ Fraud was beneficial to the Deceiver and De-  
 “ ceived, —they did it to serve *good Ends*—  
 “ were secure of its doing no Harm, &c.” By  
 these Expressions it seems as if this Conduct  
 in these good Men was not only justified, but  
 commended; hence I fear it will follow, that  
 Deceit may be in some Instances, a better  
 Mean than Veracity, Falshood than Truth,  
 to govern Mankind by; and is not this op-  
 posing the Nature of Things, and the Order  
 established in the World by God, as if we  
 were wiser than He? Surely if divine Reve-  
 lations had been necessary or expedient in  
 those Instances, these Lawgivers would have  
 been favoured with them, and not have been  
 left to form Systems that had no Foundation  
 in Truth, as if Truth and Good were incon-  
 sistent. Is it not a Reflection on Provi-  
 dence to suppose Things are not right, are  
 not best, as disposed and ordered by infinite  
 Wisdom? —Besides, does not this Concession  
 weaken the Foundation of the *Mosaic* and  
*Christian* Dispensations? For according to the  
 Quotation



Quotation above, these also might have been expedient tho' false, and wisely contrived to  
 " govern Mankind, who could not be so well  
 " managed otherwise, as by the Reverence  
 " acquired to the Authors of them from  
 " this Pretence."

ON the contrary, I cannot persuade myself that any Revelations were necessary or expedient but the *Mosaic* and *Christian*, because no others were thought so by the Governor of the World, else he would have undoubtedly given others; and if real Revelations were not necessary or expedient, then it could not be necessary or expedient to feign any, in order to tame barbarous People, &c. Not to insist that untamed and barbarous People are generally better than the most civilized and polished; notwithstanding the advantageous Ideas annexed to the Sound of the latter Words, and the dreadful ones annexed to the former. Were not, for Instance, the *Americans* a much better as well as happier People, before the civilized and polished *Europeans* undertook to tame and civilize them?

As

As the Happiness of the People is or ought to be the End of all Government, a wise and good Man, having this *and nothing else* in View, would not, I am persuaded, find it difficult to convince any People of his good Intentions (especially Barbarous, who had not yet been civilized into a Suspicion of Governors) even without pretending to any Revelation, which I cannot think *the only Way* to bring them to submit to Government.

No doubt, the full Persuasion of another Life of Rewards and Punishments, is a great additional Motive, and which I would by no Means weaken; but at the same time I see, that this distant Consideration (as it is too generally thought) has but small Influence on the Bulk of those who believe it, in Comparison of nearer Objects, which strike the Imagination much more strongly, and cause them to act against Conscience and their better Judgment; of which innumerable Instances might be alledged from the highest to the lowest Ranks; among many others, how much too common a Case is it, for young Women



Women after having committed one Crime,—in order to conceal their Shame, to add that of Murther, than which there cannot be a stronger Instance that present, near Motives, operate more forcibly than those of another Life,---yet perhaps not one of these unhappy Creatures have the least Doubt of the Heinousness of the Sin, nor of the Risque they run on that Account. I chuse this as a Case in Point, and the rather because here it cannot be alledged either on the one Hand, that the Offender has been before hardened by a long Course of Iniquity, or on the other, that the wicked Action is the immediate Effect of a sudden Transport of Passion. How many Instances might be produced to shew, that Mankind are almost universally influenced and governed by present, or near and temporal Motives? But it would be endless, and must be needless, because they will occur to every one who reflects on what passes in the World.

On the contrary, how very few are properly influenced by what they not only pretend to believe, but really do believe of another State? This has in general so little Effect,  
that

that those who appear more in earnest, are too often ridiculed as Enthusiasts and Superstitious, even by those of the same Faith.

I MIGHT mention for Instance, the Followers of *Whitfield* and *Westley*, in this Age, among whom I doubt not, are many truly pious Christians, much more like the primitive, than some of their Brethren of the same Church of *England* who scoff at them. There are many others, whose Lives are answerable to their Professions, but not very many, compared with such on whom these Considerations seem to have little or no Effect. However, all these would submit to a good Government that should tolerate them, and the rest appear to regulate their Actions by temporal Regards, so far at least, that good Laws would, in all Probability, answer the Ends of Government, without the Sanction of future Rewards and Punishments, where Revelation is wanting; so that I suppose it not necessary in such a Case, for a Lawgiver who knows of none, to impose a System of his own Invention for one; and for this additional Reason, because whatsoever is false in its Foundation, may possibly be



be discover'd to be so, and when discover'd, would injure the best System in the World built upon it. As Mr. *Locke* somewhere says, " Truth never suffers more than when built on, or mixed with Falshood." Thus if good Men had never thought themselves at Liberty to dispense with Truth on any Pretext whatsoever, as there would have been no counterfeit Revelations by their Means, so the true would be received with less Difficulty or Suspicion.

I CONCEIVE that in the same Proportion as Falshood is justified and countenanced, Truth is hurt.

SUPPOSE any one of these good Men, who had already established a System of his own, for a divine Revelation, shou'd afterwards come to the Knowledge of the true, whether *Mosaic* or *Christian* (allow me to imagine one or other possible for Argument's Sake, since the *Mosaic* did subsist in the Times refer'd to, and the same plausible Pretence might somewhere produce a feign'd Revelation after the *Christian* Æra) In this Case, ought he to maintain his own, in opposition  
to

to the true ? or ought he not rather to endeavour the Establishment of the latter, tho' at the Expence of the former, and of his own Veracity ? With how ill a Grace soever he would be obliged to say, That what he had already proved (sufficiently at least to gain Belief) was nevertheless false ; and that now he had a truly divine Revelation to propose. He must shew that his former Proofs were all forged, tho' they had been effectual, and then produce new and real Vouchers for the truly divine Revelation; in which Purpose, if he succeeded and obtained Assent, he would do no more than he had done before in support of a Forgery ; so that Truth and Falshood are supposed to answer the same Ends, than which nothing can be more injurious to Truth.

IF *St. Paul* disbelieved all the Miracles of our Saviour and his Disciples, and particularly the Resurrection, who had so much nearer and stronger Evidence of them, than can be offered to any Age, or Country distant from the Scene of Action, is it now unreasonable to hope for supernatural Means of Conviction ?



tion ? For we may fairly conclude, that nothing less than such Revelation immediately and personally to himself, clear from all Possibility of Doubt, could have overcome his Unbelief, and such would overcome every one's.

AND here I would ask, what kind of Arguments, or what Means you would make use of to convince and convert the Inhabitants of *Madagascar*, or of *Africa*, or of any other Country where the Gospel was never yet heard of ?

How would you persuade them that *Jesus Christ* was born of a Virgin, by the Power of the Holy Ghost, without the Concurrence of a Man ? That, being sent into the World by God to teach a refined Morality, and a general Resurrection to Rewards and Punishments in another Life, in order to prove his divine Mission, he wrought many great and wonderful Miracles, even raised the Dead, &c. that he suffered Death himself as a Propitiation for the Sins of the World, and that he was raised again on the third Day, according to his own Prediction, and that he  
did

did foretell it, and remained forty Days on Earth; that he was then taken up into Heaven in the Sight of his Disciples, to whom he afterwards sent the Holy Ghost, as he had promised, and enabled them to work Miracles, to speak with Tongues, &c. I say, how convince them of the Truth of these Things, without working such Miracles as you will be obliged to tell them were wrought, in order to prove this Gospel to those who first received it?

It will be necessary also to go back to the Old Testament, and explain in some consistent Manner the Formation of the first Man, of the Woman in particular, their Fall, that their Posterity were some how involved in the Guilt, and liable to Punishment or Misery on that Score, being deprived of Immortality and subject to eternal Death, that is to say, the Doctrine of Original Sin, with its Consequences, *As in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive.* That he was (in some Manner or other) to restore Mankind to what was forfeited by *Adam*? The Satisfaction of *Christ* is represented in the New Testament,



as necessary to Pardon and Acceptance with God, which must also be insisted on, or some different Turn must be given to those Texts that seem to propose it as necessary. Now may they not probably object that Satisfaction, if adequate, leaves no Room for Mercy ; and if not adequate, then it must be supposed partial ; and if so, appears not to be necessary at all. Nor does it seem in the least derogatory to the Honour of God, or inconsistent with his Attributes (even with his Justice) to pardon penitent Offenders without any Satisfaction, but exalts his Mercy, which they will find our Scripture says, *He has exalted above all his Name*. For though Justice requires, that every Being shou'd render to others what is owing from that Being, it does not surely oblige him rigorously to demand what is owing to himself from others. No one is the less just for remitting his own Due ; therefore the same Scripture says in another Place, *He is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins* (i. e.) if we confess and repent : because he has promised so to do, for Justice or Faithfulness requires he should keep his Promise.

THE Trinity explained in any manner, whether in the Orthodox, or *Arian* Sense, or any other, so as to be intelligible and consistent without putting a Force on those Passages of Scripture commonly referr'd to, for Proof of it.

ELECTION and Reprobation must be maintained if that Side be taken, or explained away if the other Side be preferr'd : In these Cases the Scriptures should not be wrested or strained, but a plain consistent Sense acknowledged. This can do no Hurt to Truth, which I suppose to be the only thing contended for; and therefore if any Doctrine there taught, plainly contradicts our natural Notions, it should be honestly given up as interpolated, or falsely translated, or at least not defended.

HOWEVER, my Question is, By what Means you would propose to convert Heathens to the Gospel of *Christ* ? how persuade them of the Truth of these Things, and the rest that distinguish Christianity, and especially



cially without the Power of working Miracles (and among others that of Tongues, which was given expressly for the Purpose) or could you depend upon having these Powers attending your Ministry on such an Occasion? Which you certainly ought to do, and might confidently put it to the Hazard, if the Reason commonly given for the ceasing of Miracles be the true one, *viz.* that they became unnecessary to Nations already converted to Christianity, though they were necessary to such as had not yet received it.

AND I believe it to be the general Notion of Mankind, that Miracles are absolutely necessary to prove and establish any Revelation from God. Those to whom *Christ* preached the Gospel, demanded that Proof of his divine Mission: Matt. xii. 38. *The Scribes and Pharisees say to him, Master, we would see a Sign*—Chap. xvi. 1. *The Pharisees and Sadducees desired that he would shew a Sign from Heaven.* St. John ii. 18. *The Jews said unto him, what Sign shewest thou unto us? seeing that thou dost these Things.* All plainly intimating the Necessity of such a Voucher to the Authority

he pretended to ; and Ver. 23. *Many believed in his Name, when they saw the Miracles which he did.* Chap. v. 36. *But I have greater Witness than that of John; for the Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear Witness of me that the Father hath sent me.* Chap. vi. 14. *Then those Men, when they had seen the Miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a Truth that Prophet, that should come into the World.—Ver. 29, 30. Jesus said unto them, This is the Work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.—They said therefore unto him, What Sign shewest thou then, that we may see and believe thee? what dost thou work?—Ver. 24. If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly.—Ver. 25. Jesus answered, I told you, and ye believe not ; the Works that I do in my Father's Name, they bear Witness of me.—Ver. 37. If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not.—Ver. 38. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the Works. In Consequence of which, it is added, ver. 42. And many believed on him there.*

By all which it evidently appears, both that the People to whom, and the Person by whom



whom this new Revelation was proposed, were agreed, that the Power of working Miracles was a necessary and proper Means to convince Mankind of its divine Original.

THE Evangelists are said to be inspired Writers ; now though it is not agreed how far this Inspiration might influence, whether to the very Diction, or minutest Expression ; yet the least Degree of it must be supposed sufficient to guard against any gross Errors, and particularly to secure them from relating false Facts, or recounting Miracles that were not wrought ; and this must be insisted on, even by such as give up the Inspiration (if there are any such) and who may suppose only that they wrote (as faithful Historians) the Things they were Eye-witnesses of, or had such Testimony for, as left them no Room to doubt the Truth of ; or as St. Luke says, *The Things that were most surely believed among them as they delivered them, who from the Beginning were Eye-witnesses.* So that all Christians must agree, that whatsoever is related, especially as miraculous, is undoubtedly true ; for if any one Miracle there re-

corded be disproved, all the rest have no better Authority or Evidence, and so the whole must stand or fall together.

I SUPPOSE no Believers will put the Truth of Christianity upon so doubtful an Issue, as to allow that some, or any one of the Miracles related in the Gospels may be false, and rest only on the Truth of others for its Support; because they have the same Testimony for what is rejected, as for what is retained and believed, and because they have no Criterion to distinguish between 'em.

IF it be reply'd, that this however may be the Case, *viz.* That some may be true, and these the greatest recorded, though others may not be so; and that it is not uncommon for those who very justly esteem Persons of superior Talents to ascribe to 'em Things they never said or did, upon Hearsay (in which they may sometimes be mistaken) from the great Probability of their being true, on this general Foundation, that they have known others equal, or greater said or done by the same Persons; and that therefore the

Falsity



Falsity of some, does not necessarily imply the Falsity of all, as no one doubts but my Lord —has said many witty Things, tho' some that are ascribed to him, were never said by him.

WHOEVER shall suggest any thing of this Nature, must first give up Inspiration in every Degree, and must then shew us some Mark or Rule to distinguish the Genuine from the Spurious, or some more authentic Evidence for those retained than for those rejected, which I presume cannot be done; and then to make the Cases parallel, it must be proved that the Things said to be done were actually done by some Person or other, as the Things ascribed to that noble Lord were said by some Body.

PROVIDENCE must be supposed so far concerned as to preserve the Evidence some how or other clear of such Uncertainties, to all of whom Faith is required.

NOW as one of you Gentlemen, has thought the Conversion of *St. Paul* alone sufficient to establish the Belief of Christianity on, taking in all its Circumstances, with the Arguments which may be drawn from it,

and has thence concluded the Whole to be a divine Revelation: So it will be permitted to examine any part of that Whole, to see whether the Conclusion be just, or whether it be not too general,

Suppose the miraculous Conception of the *Virgin Mary*, which is attested by *St. Matthew* and *St. Luke*, be mentioned with that View.

HERE is an *English* Book, said to be translated from *Greek*, and which was originally wrote in *Greek* or *Hebrew*, about 1700 Years ago (as supposed) by *Matthew*, a Disciple of *Jesus*, and another from *Greek*, wrote by *Luke*; these assure us that *Jesus* was born of a Virgin.

I TAKE it for granted, that the Translation is generally faithful, and therefore for the Sake of the Argument, will suppose all original, and universally understood.—Our Purpose is that of converting Heathens, to whom this History is to be offered and proved, and whose Objections are to be answered, as they arise. These may be probably supposed such as follow.—It will appear to them on reading these Books, that  
the



the Evangelists don't pretend to be inspired, as the Prophets in the Old Testament never fail to do. And that *Luke* particularly mentions the Occasion of his Writing, by which it should seem he was not. Now the Account of it (if not by particular Revelation to each of them severally) they will say these Writers can only have from herself or *Joseph*, or others relating it from them.

As for *Joseph*, he finding her with Child (not by himself) who as yet was only betrothed, had intended to divorce her for Adultery, from which he is prevented by an Angel, who appeared to him in a Dream, and told him that she was with Child by the Holy Ghost.

SUPPOSING this to be the Case, it is reasonable to believe, that she must have acquainted her Husband with it, in order to satisfy him; which they will say might possibly occasion his Dream.

It is not believed, that ever any Woman before or since, from the Beginning of the World, had a Child but in the ordinary, natural Way. THIS

THIS miraculous Conception is wholly omitted by *Mark* and *John*, the two other Evangelists; but *Luke* Chap. i.—27. recounts the Particulars of the Visitation of *Mary* by an Angel. Ver. 34. *Mary said to the Angel, how shall this be, seeing I know not a Man?* He answered, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the Power of the Highest shall over-shadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.*

ALL this must come from herself originally, for the Conversation is between her and the Angel only.

CH. ii. from Ver. 45. to the End.—*Now his Parents went up to Jerusalem, &c.—And his Mother said unto him—Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy Father and I have sought thee sorrowing—And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them.*

CH. xxii. *Is not this Joseph's Son, &c.—So that among the People he passed for Joseph's Son, and thereby Mary's Character was not called*



called in Question with them, and for her Husband and near Relations, they were acquainted with the Fact as related by herself.

ON Supposition that this Account be true, can it possibly be proved to them without immediate Revelation?

BUT if he was not the Son of *Joseph*, then how was he descended from *David*? and so the *Messias* promised? for both the Genealogies are traced either to *Joseph* downwards, or from him upwards—and not to or from *Mary*, of whose Line not one Word is said.

AND on the other Hand, if he was truly the Son of *Joseph*, —(*John* i. 45. *We have found him of whom Moses in the Law, and the Prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph,*) then he might be descended from *David*, tho' not a divine Person by Generation at least.—But then again, What Credit can be given to any of the Miracles recorded by these two Evangelists? For none of them all are more solemnly related and insisted on than this.

THUS

THUS far our Heathen is supposed to object; and perhaps it may be no difficult Task to remove his Scruples, and to give them a clear and satisfactory Solution.

IF he should enquire more narrowly into these Writings, and the manner of their Conveyance to us, he wou'd be informed by some Christians, that this Account is suspected to have been interpolated, and that the two first Chapters of *Matthew* were not originally in his Gospel, but added long after it was published to the World, which has been said by some Authors. *Luke* however is receiv'd as authentic. So that if *Matthew* be rejected, *i. e.* this Account in him, the Difficulty still remains in *Luke*, whose entire Gospel must stand or fall with it, because the other Miracles have no better Authority than this; and therefore deserve no more Credit on the same Authority.

IF there never had been any Dispute about *Matthew's* Gospel, the Argument against the whole would be the stronger; because in that Case, this Account would have half the Evidence



dence of the best-attested Miracles, that is, would have the full Testimony of two of the four Evangelists. Whereas, if *Matthew's* Evidence be given up, or doubted, it will have the Testimony of one only undoubted; and if his could be fairly given up too, then other Miracles better attested by all four, would be the less affected; but if this be retained on the same Evidence as the rest, they must all stand or fall with it.

AND if the other two Gospels come down to us by the same kind of Conveyance, how difficult must be the Proof of any of them?

It is said, they have all passed through the Hands of those who had it in their Power to preserve or destroy what they pleased—that several Councils have from Time to Time taken such Liberties,—and the different Sentiments and Interests of Orthodox and Hereticks, *Athanasians* and *Arrians*, *Jews*, and the Followers of *Simon Magus*, &c. have occasioned great Corruptions in these which we have, besides the Destruction of others; as also of the Works of the Adversaries to Christianity, all which if preserved, might have given great

great Light, and perhaps have ascertained many of those Things which are now doubtful.

THE above Facts are acknowledged by the most learned and candid Christians, particularly by Mr. *Whiston* and others, who have spent great Part of their Lives in these Enquiries.—And therefore it does not seem true, that we have this History conveyed to us under equal Advantages with other ancient ones, which have only suffered what mere Transcription, and honest Translation without Biass, may have occasioned; whereas it is confessed, that these Writings have, in different Ages, been in the Possession of People whose Sentiments and Interests were diametrically opposite, who have hated each other with the most inveterate Hatred, and destroyed every Thing in their respective Powers that might make for their Adversaries. I say, under these Disadvantages it cannot, with any Colour be said, that they have suffered no more than other indifferent Histories, about which there have been no Contests, and which it has been the Interest and Inclination of every Age



Age to preserve as entire and uncorrupt as possible. If therefore Credit be given to those Facts herein related, which are in their own Nature probable, is not this the utmost that we are likely to obtain of our new Converts by mere Dint of Reasoning, without supernatural Means? For (as above) such Facts as are improbable, and of an extraordinary Nature, they will demand a Proof of as extraordinary. For such Facts would not be generally believed, tho' related in Histories less contested or corrupted, than these are confessed to be; for Example, if in the Histories of the Lives of *Alexander* or *Julius Caesar*, it was confidently asserted, that either of them flew in the Air, or did any Thing else supernatural or miraculous, these would not be believed; tho' at the same Time it is not doubted, that the one overcame *Darius* and *Porus*, and the other *Pompey*, &c. The plain Reason is, that human Testimony uncontradicted, is a sufficient Foundation for crediting such Facts, but not supernatural ones.

It is said, that these Books have as undoubted Marks of Authenticity as any others;  
yet

yet our Heathen may think there is Room to question that, for the Reasons alledged above. But supposing it were granted, what is to be inferred from the Concession? Why, he will say, that they should be regarded as such others are.

*Herodotus, Livy*, and other celebrated Historians, who are justly esteemed and believed, where they relate natural and probable Events, having related (together with these) extraordinary Prodigies and supernatural Events; sensible and judicious Readers are agreed in rejecting the latter.

It is not the Authenticity that is disputed in these last mentioned Writings, but it is the extraordinary Nature of certain Facts that is thought by every body sufficient Reason for disbelieving them, while others in the same Books are credited without Hesitation.—All who believe that *Julius Caesar* was killed by *Brutus* and his Associates, do not believe the Omens preceding and attending that Event, tho' both related by the same Historians.



MANKIND have always reserved to themselves the Liberty of reasonable Beings, in receiving or rejecting according to Evidence, and have expected and required Evidence of a Nature (or in a Proportion) suitable to the Things proposed to them for their Belief, except where Education or Prejudices of other kinds influence.

And every Man in the World would think it right to act on the above Principles, in examining any Religion but his own, by which Means all Religions may come to be so examined, and ours (among the rest) I suppose has sometimes been, by those professing others. And must and will, by all to whom it may at any Time be proposed, which no Protestant can consistently object to ; and this is one principal Reason of my offering these Thoughts to your Consideration, that by having such Doubts resolved, and Difficulties removed, not only Sceptics and Infidels may be silenc'd, but rational Means established of proposing our Religion to *Pagans* and Idolaters, else we

are not likely to have much better Success than the Missionaries in *China*.

THERE is a remarkable Passage in Dr. *Middleton*'s Introductory Discourse, p. 49. where speaking of *Cranmer* and *Ridley*, "Two Fathers of the Protestant Church (says he) as truly venerable as Christianity perhaps has to boast of, since the Times of the Apostles; when these were brought out of their Prisons on Pretence of holding public Disputations, &c. and when they had solidly evinced the Truth of their Doctrines, and baffled all the Sophistry of their Opponents, by the clear and unanswerable Testimonies of the Scriptures, it grieves us after all, to see them labouring and gravelled at a Passage of *Chrysostom*, or *Ambrose*, or *Hilary*, &c. and giving their Adversaries an Occasion of Triumph, by submitting to an Authority which was nothing to the Purpose, and which in those unhappy Circumstances, they were neither at liberty to reject, nor yet able to reconcile to their Cause."



I do not pretend that this is a parallel Case; but if these good Bishops had not submitted to the Authority of those Fathers, they had not been so gruelled, nor had given such Occasion of Triumph to their Adversaries. So in like manner, if nothing more was contended for, and insisted on by Protestants, than can be fairly maintained by their professed Principles, they would find it much easier to baffle their Adversaries, and to keep their Ground against all Opposition.

It might have been mentioned in its proper Place, that several Passages of the Old Testament, referred to as Prophecies of the *Messias*, by the Writers of the New, would also (in the Course of Evidence) be examined; and if these should not appear to answer the Purpose for which they are cited, then the Citations would seem rather to discredit the Writers who make them. As for Instance, *Acts* iii. 22, 23, &c. For Moses truly said unto your Fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you, of your Brethren, like unto me, him shall ye hear in all

*Things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every Soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be destroyed from among the People; yea, and all the Prophets from Samuel (and those that follow after) have likewise foretold of these Days. Ch. vii. 37. This is that Moses which said unto the Children of Israel, a Prophet shall the Lord, &c.*—These are supposed to mean that *Jesus* was that Prophet foretold or promised by *Moses*; but surely it would be very difficult to make new unprejudiced People perceive this, who would certainly apply it to *Joshua*, and would never think of *Jesus Christ*, as the Prophet like unto *Moses*, (and still the less on account of the great Disparity of their Personages, the one being a mere Man, the other said to be a divine Person) especially on reading the Passage referred to with Attention; there it appears that *Moses* was just going to leave them before they entered the promised Land,—and lest they should now despair as destitute of a Conductor, he assures them that God would raise up, &c. in his Stead.



DEUT. xxxiv. 9. *And Joshua was full of the Spirit of Wisdom; for Moses had laid his Hands upon him, and the Children of Israel bearkened unto him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses.* 10. *And there arose not a Prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew Face to Face.*

JOSH. i. 1. *Now after the Death of Moses, it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Joshua, Moses' Minister, saying,—Moses my Servant is dead; now therefore go over this Jordan, thou and all this People, unto the Land which I give to them, even to the Children of Israel.—5. There shall not any Man be able to stand before thee all the Days of thy Life: As I was with Moses, so will I be with thee, I will not fail thee nor forsake thee.—16. And they answered Joshua, saying, All that thou commandest us we will do, and whithersoever thou sendest us we will go.—17. According as we bearkened unto Moses in all Things, so will we bearken unto thee, only the Lord thy God be with thee as he was with Moses.—18. Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy Commandment, and will not bearken*

*unto thy Words, in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to Death.*

*CH. iii. 7. And the Lord said unto Joshua, this Day will I begin to magnify thee in the Sight of all Israel, that they may know that as I was with Moses, so I will be with thee.—9. Come hither, and hear the Word of the Lord, &c.*

*14. IN that Day the Lord magnified Joshua in the Sight of all Israel, and they feared him as they feared Moses, all the Days of his Life.*

*CH. x. 12, 13. Then spake Joshua unto the Lord, and he said in the Sight of all Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon, &c. And the Sun stood still—So the Sun stood still in the Midst of Heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole Day.—14. And there was no Day like that before it, or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the Voice of a Man.*

*Now either Peter and Stephen did not apply this Prophecy to Jesus Christ, or else it would seem to undisciplined Readers, that they were mistaken.*

AGAIN,



AGAIN, Matt. ii. 14, 15. *He took the young Child and his Mother by Night, and departed into Egypt, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet,—Out of Egypt have I called my Son.*

HOSEA xi. 1. *When Israel was a Child, then I loved him, and called my Son out of Egypt.* 3. *I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their Arms.* 4. *I drew them with the Cords of a Man, &c.* 5. *He shall not return into the Land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his King.* 7. *My People are bent to back-sliding from me.* 8. *How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee, Israel, &c.*

CH. xii. 9. *I that am the Lord thy God from Egypt.*

13. *By a Prophet the Lord brought Israel out of Egypt, and by a Prophet was he preserved.*

WILL it not be understood, that by *my Son* is meant *Israel*, (i. e.) the Children of *Israel*? And does not the Occasion, with all its Cir-

cumstances, seem to indicate that the whole is an Expostulation with the *Israelites*? &c. And will this be thought to have any sort of Reference to *Christ*?

AGAIN, it is said, *Matt. i. 22. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the Prophet saying, Behold a Virgin shall be with Child, and shall bring forth a Son, &c. and they shall call his Name Immanuel. Isa. vii. 14, to 16.*

THE Prophet speaks to *Abaz* of a Child to be born as a Sign to him and his Family, and (says the Prophet) *before this Child shall come to know Good and Evil, the Land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her Kings, viz. Rezin and Pekah.*—It is also said by the Prophet, *Ch. viii. I went in unto the Prophetess, and she conceived and bare a Son. Then said the Lord to me, call his Name Maher-shalal-hashbaz, for before the Child shall have Knowledge to say my Father and my Mother, the Riches of Damascus, and the Spoil of Samaria shall be taken away before the King of Assyria. For it is there said, that Damascus is the Head of Syria, and that Rezin*  
is



is the Head of Damascus, and the Head of Samaria is Remaliah's Son (i. e.) Pekah.

THE Word in the Original, translated Virgin, signifying a young Woman, married or unmarried, not necessarily a Virgin, as the Learned say.—In the Margin it is remarked, that this came to pass in the fourth Year of Abaz. Now it will be ask'd, how a Child born several hundred Years after, could be a Sign to him.

Should it be demanded, what is all I have been saying to you, Gentlemen, to whom this Letter is address'd? and particularly to your Performances? I answer, my Design is not to undertake the Confutation of your Arguments, but is in general the same you profess, viz. to search after Truth, and then propose the Effects of my Enquiries to (you and) the Publick; and your Learning, Ingenuity, and Candour, encourage me to take this Liberty (tho' I am not known to either of you, or to the Author, the former of you refers to as the Occasion of his Writing) in Hopes my Mistakes or inconclusive Reasoning

ing may be shewn, either by you, or any others with the like Spirit of Candour, with which you have wrote:—But if any on the Contrary shall think proper to take Advantage of the Want of Method, Inaccuracy of Expression, seeming Repetitions (never intended in the same View) or other such-like Faults in this irregular Piece, and treat it only with Ridicule or Railing; I shall despise the Misapplication of their Learning and Wit, as nothing to the Purpose, and the more, as I pretend not to either, nor have Leisure (if these were not wanting) to methodize and correct.

I SHALL no more regard any thing wrote in the Spirit of Bigotry, but shall pay all imaginable Deference to fair and candid Reasoning.

POST-





## POSTSCRIPT.

**U**PON closing the foregoing Sheets, a Pamphlet was just published, entitled, *Four Queries concerning the Miracles said to have been wrought in the first Ages of the Church, &c. addressed to the learned World.* Now though I pretend not to be one of those to whom it is peculiarly addressed, nevertheless I cannot think myself wholly unconcerned in the Subject of it.

**W**E *English* Christians call the *English* Bible a divine Revelation; and if it is not, what have we to depend upon? If the Original was such, the Translation in our, and in every Language, must be presumed to be such; for whoever supposes the Original to be wrote by Inspiration, or under the Influence and Direction of the Spirit of God, must also suppose the same, or something equivalent of all the Translations, or else that  
 God

God having once given a Revelation of his Will to a certain People in a certain Country in their Language, and declared it to be design'd for all the World, yet after this first Promulgation, wholly disregarded all other Ages and Nations ; and abandoned them to the Chance of unlearned, ignorant, interested, or designing Translators. But can this be the Case ? If a Man cannot be saved without being a Christian, can he not be a Christian neither without understanding *Greek* ? Surely if the New Testament be a divine Revelation, and intended by God Almighty for the whole World ; Providence is as much concerned to preserve it in Translations as in the Original. If it should be said, that this Objection wou'd still go lower, and that those who were so illiterate as not to be able to read, know no more by an *English* than by a *Greek* Bible. This would be granted, if it were not that these find every one reads to them, the same Things, and even the same Words, which they may hear also every *Sunday* at Church for Years without Variation, &c. Whereas the Learned are few in comparison, and they differ in the Interpretation of many Passages of

Con-



Consequence, and that even affect Orthodoxy, and the Unlearned can never know who is right ; for besides the Integrity and Impartiality of an Interpreter, his critical Learning must also be depended upon, of which he [the Unlearned] can be no Judge at all.

THE Gospel is to be preached in, or to all the World. But what Gospel ? surely this same Gospel of *Jesus Christ*, else the Prediction is not true ; and if the same, then Providence is concerned about the Means as well as the Thing. And we may rest assured that we have it, as it was intended we should receive it ; and so will the Inhabitants of any other Country, when they receive it : Not that any People are to suffer themselves to be imposed on without Caution or Examination ; but this I am sure of, that nothing more of this Nature can be required, than is in their Power.

THIS Author, pag. 9 and 10, says, ' Before  
' I took the *Greek* into my Hands, I imagin'd  
' it must have been in that Language literally  
' *ἕως τοῦ τέλους τῆς γῆς*, as in our own, *even*  
' *to the End of the World*. Had this been the  
Case,

Case, there could have been no Reply ; but  
 without Dispute, the Power of working Mira-  
 cles in the Christian Church, must have been  
 allowed to subsist to the End of the World.

*By the Way, I do not pretend to understand the  
 Greek, but transcribe the Characters only, as  
 I find 'em in this Pamphlet.*

THE Criticism gives me Pain on the Author's  
 Account, whom I suppose to be a learned  
 Man, and who seems to have embarrassed  
 himself with the Difficulty he has rais'd ; for  
 in the above Passage, he says, " Without  
 " Dispute the Power of working Miracles in  
 " the Christian Church, must have been allow-  
 " ed to subsist to the End of the World, if the  
 " Word in the Original had been τὸ κοσμεῖν."  
 Which he imagined it was before he took the  
 Greek into his Hand. Why then (by his own  
 Confession) it was no Matter of Dispute with  
 him but that the Power of working Miracles  
 did (in this Age) actually subsist, and must to  
 the End of the World. Now with this Per-  
 swasion how he cou'd be a Protestant I do  
 not understand ; notwithstanding he says, p. 5.

" Among



“ Among ourselves of the Reformation, there  
 “ is no disputing it [*viz.* that Miracles are  
 “ ceased] but if he had been till then a Ca-  
 tholick, and the Words τῷ αἰῶνι, which he  
 translates *to the Consummation of the Age*, brought  
 him over to Protestantism, he would seem con-  
 sistent, and there would be nothing to object.

BUT if these Words will admit of our Version  
*to the End of the World*, I am for retaining this  
 latter, because I cannot conceive less to have  
 been meant by our Saviour, especially as there  
 seems to be as much Need of divine  
 and supernatural Aids at present as then ;  
 and this is what all Christians as well Pro-  
 testants as Papists avow. Do they not all pre-  
 tend to the Influence of the holy Spirit in  
 Praying, Preaching, and every other Christian  
 Duty ? and (where it becomes necessary) sure-  
 ly they might depend upon having other su-  
 pernatural Assistance, even the Power of work-  
 ing Miracles, for the Conviction and Conver-  
 sion of Heathens; because the same Reasons for  
 Miracles would in such Case subsist, as at first.

ON the contrary, does it not seem absurd  
 and unreasonable to suppose it said—I will be  
 with

with you always, or all the Days, or daily, to the End of 60 Years and no longer, or of 100 Years and no longer—or for any limited Time. But whatever Occasion the Church may have for supernatural Powers in any future Age or distant Country, I will afford none after this Age.

Is it at all probable that it cou'd be said or understood in this Sense? Is the Lord's Arm shortened that he cannot save? Is it any Difficulty to him?

THIS Author confesses he had put a restrained Sense upon another Text, p. 8. with respect to the Extent of these divine Powers in the Apostolic Age, having thought them confin'd to the Apostles only, but that he remembered *Stephen* and *Philip* among the Deacons, and many others among the *Corinthians* wrought Miracles also, &c. for the more speedy and effectual Propagation of the Faith, which is the Reason he gives, and the same I have given above; and by Analogy, where the same Reason subsists, it cannot be unreasonable to expect the like Aids.

F I N I S.



